German-American Settlers in Central Minnesota and Class and Race Relations

Elizabeth L. Engels

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Introduction

St. Cloud has long been called "White Cloud" by many throughout the state. . In recent years a number of incidents alleging racial, ethnic and gender discrimination have made the news, prompting action of the state and federal level. Early in 2008 Governor Pawlenty created an office to work on discrimination in St Cloud, since it was thought to have significant problems. The area is not known for progressive politics, its history of labor struggles, or its diversity. Amidst criticism of the state and country, the roots of this conservatism deserve an investigation. The question becomes what is the cause for this culture. To answer that one might go back to its early settlers and the politics they brought with them from their homelands, places like Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Bavaria and look at what happened to the diversity of settlers and ideas that existed at the foundation of the city. The German element that seems to have dominated the city's background was not always so prevalent, nor so conservative. While German immigrants were among the most willing to fight to end slavery, and the most excited about literature and social philosophy, these aspects of the early settlers were impacted by the conflicts that composed the first century of politics of Central Minnesota and the nation. The movement toward conservatism of the city was created, not by an over-riding characteristic of the early settlers, but by events that encouraged the isolation and cohesion of the German-Americans at the beginning of the 20th Century.

This is a paper that is designed to look at the factors that contributed to the

settling of this region and how the people who originally founded the city have shaped the culture and politics of the city. It is also going to take a look at what politics and social traditions of the early immigrants in the area brought from their home country to Central Minnesota, how these concepts played out in the country-shaping events of the Civil War, and the culture that spread afterwards. It will also look at the anti-immigration sentiments of the second half of the 19th century through the First World War, especially through the work of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety. This will be examined in the work and ideas demonstrated by the early leaders of the community and the media, and conclude by relating it to modern day local politics.

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St. Cloud and the Early Character of Central Minnesota

St. Cloud is the biggest city and heart of Central Minnesota. It is made up of three counties, primarily Stearns, while spilling over slightly into Benton and Sherburne. Its history is somewhat brief in the scheme of the country. St. Cloud in the 1850's was a vast amount of prairie land, cut open by the Mississippi. Its population until this time had been primarily Native Americans, with the occasional fur trader. However in just a decade the arrival of several ambitious settlers drastically changed the landscape.

Although by the turn of the 20th century German immigrants were the core of the city, the founders were very different. While there were conservative elements to the city, there were progressive activists like Jane Grey Swisshelm. Even though the city was a town of the frontier, it was home to important politicians, who impacted state and federal matters. Because there was a diverse array of daring settlers, the city's foundation was fraught with divisive political issues and the clashes of several different groups.

Originally, the area was divided into three cities, each founded by a separate group. The first to build a house in the area was Sylvanus Lowry, a Southern General under the Buchanan Administration. Lowry was a Tennessean fur trader and described as a "staunch Southern Democrat." He operated a fur trading post in Watab, Minnesota but in 1854 he made a town plat in Central Minnesota and named it Arcadia. Like many settlers at the time, he wanted to attract people to his new city, and generally recruited others from home, which mean*t* for him, Southerners. However, he did not typically

attract the poor whites of the south, but rather, people who were described as "cultured, well-educated" and brought to the region an "aristocratic element".[1] They also brought with them 50 to 60 slaves from their southern plantations, although Minnesota was named a free territory.

On the opposite side of the spectrum was the area of the city founded by George Fuller Brott, a New Yorker. In 1854 he began recruiting other settlers from the east. One of these settlers was Jane Grey Swisshelm, a political activist and writer. This settlement became overwhelmingly Yankee and Protestant as well as "temperance-loving", and anti-slavery. Yet records indicate that this portion of the area's population was actually strongly German-American by heritage. These settlers, including Stephen Miller, later a governor of Minnesota, were third or fourth generation Americans whose families were among the first immigrants to Pennsylvania. While German by heritage, they were very Americanized and identified little with the ways of their later immigrant German neighbors in St. Cloud.

These two groups were starkly divided in a way that was reflective of national politics, and the state. As part of a new territory, St. Cloud attracted the extremes of plantation owners and abolitionists, who were then forced to live side by side.

"The dichotomy that existed in the states bordering the Deep South existed also

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[1]Gertrude B. Gove, A History of St. Cloud in the Civil War, St. Cloud: Stearns County Historical Society, 1976. (8)

in this northernmost state: pro-slavery people lived next to abolitionists, who

lived next to neutrals. These forces, and their ensuing controversies were quite

evident in St. Cloud. Upper Town's Sylvanus Lowry had kept slaves, even

though Minnesota was a free territory. Most of the Germans and Yankees of

Middle and Lower Towns, however, were traditionally opposed to slavery." [2]

This dichotomy made the city a hotbed for political debate and journalistic rivalry. Jane

Grey Swisshelm became the editor of the first journal in the area entitled *The Visitor*.

She wrote scathing editorials about President Buchanan's administration, which angered

the slave-owning General Lowry. So much so in fact that Lowry broke into Swisshelm's

office with a number of other angry Southerners, stole the printing press and dumped it

into the nearby Mississippi.   Swisshelm at that point feared for her life, but in the

following weeks, gathered money for a new press and began a new paper. This paper she

entitled the *The St. Cloud Democrat*. Lowry then rallied his personal lawyer to start a

more conservative paper.

Politically, Swisshelm was a staunch Republican due to her abolitionist ideals,

but wanted to reclaim the idea of democracy and what she considered the true meaning of

'democrat' aside from the political party designation of the time, and so named her paper

after that. While for her time she was a progressive woman, a strong opponent of slavery

[2] John J. Dominik, and John C. Massmann, St. Cloud : The Triplet City, New York: American Historical P, 2002. 29.

and an advocate for women's rights, she demonstrates another typical prejudice of her

era. She was vehemently against the Native Americans around St. Cloud. In one article

she proudly wrote, "332 votes were polled in the precinct and not any were votes of half-

breeds or Indians."[3] Her views were reflective of other abolitionists in the area as well.

Another family named the Freemans moved from the Deep South because of their hatred

for slavery but the father was the first to start an anti-Indian militia during the Sioux

Uprising, which was considered a serious threat by Central Minnesotans, although St.

Cloud was not directly involved. This inconsistency in extending democratic ideals to all

was characteristic of several figures that loomed large in the history of the city.

The third settlement, in between General Lowry's and Brott's, was that of John

L. Wilson. While Wilson was a Mennonite, the settlers on his plat were typically

German Catholics. Wilson is considered the 'father' of St. Cloud and was responsible for

the naming of the city. He had been reading *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* and was

charmed by the references to the palace in St. Cloud, France.

While Wilson was responsible for plotting land for the city and naming the

village, Father Francis Pierz is usually credited in the St. Cloud area for contributing the

most to the settlement effort. Wilson was thrilled by the life of Napoleon, while Pierz,

born in 1785 in Carniola, then Austria, experienced in early childhood the invasion of

Napoleon's forces. He was a priest in Carniola, where a missionary recruiter from the

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[3] Gove 12.

U.S. approached him. At age 49 he left his home country for Michigan territory, finally

arriving in 1838. He spent a number of years in that area, but had moved to Minnesota

territory by 1852. There he spent his first years amongst the Winnebago tribe of the

North.

Pierz' goal was not to 'civilize' the Native Americans, unlike many of his

contemporaries, but rather to show them the faith of the Catholic Church in the belief that

that would change them for the better. "They were not tempted to Americanize or to

Frenchify the Indian. Their objective was to impress upon him the Christian spirit and

character and to stimulate him to develop a satisfactory domestic, social, and economic

life out of the rudiments of civilization that he already possessed."[4]   There are numerous

accounts of his positive work with the tribe.

Yet often this effort seemed futile amidst the economic and political pressures

of the time.

"In this work of Christianizing and civilizing Father Pierz had to contend not

only with Indian nature but with evils he could not successfully combat, the fur

trader, the liquor dealer, and unscrupulous government officials. It was to the

advantage of the fur trader to keep the Indian poor and un-civilized, so that he

might have no other resource than hunting. Thus the Indian would continue to

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[4] "Father, Pierz, Missionary and Colonizer," Documents, 1935. 106.

bring in pelts for the market."[5]

In a letter to Protestant Rev. Joseph Cretin, Pierz discusses his frustration with the fur traders' interaction with Native Americans. "These Indians support themselves by hunting and fishing. Wild rice is their vegetable. They hardly ever think of cultivating the land. The reason is because the business men endeavor to make them believe that such labor was only for slaves, and that for Indians hunting was a more suitable occupation."[6] While much of the early wealth of Central Minnesota was due to the fur-trading industry via settlers like General Lowry, Pierz's views on the matter reveal another aspect of diversity during the city's early days. His approach to his mission work also is an interesting contrast to the Indian-hating mentality of Swisshelm and other Yankees in the city of St. Cloud.

While Father Pierz had initially been opposed to the white settlement of the territory, in the 1850's he began to see this as an inevitable situation. Although he preferred that the land stay in the hands of the Native American tribes, he felt the next best group was his fellow countrymen, and so in 1854 began a rigorous campaign to recruit German Catholic settlers to the area. He sent letters to be printed in German newspapers all over the U.S., as well as in Germany. He boasted of the beauty, and farming potential of the land. He also wrote pages on the mildness of the winters.

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[5] Grace 6.
[6] Father Pierz, letter to Rt. Rev. Joseph Cretin, 25 Jan. 1854, <u>Acta et Dicta</u>, Collegeville: St. Johns University, 1935. 109

Needless to say some of this was exaggeration.

Yet he was very particular about whom he recruited to the city. A translation of a letter printed in the German newspaper, *Wahrheitsfreund*, in Cincinnati stated: "Hasten then good Germans before the land is all taken up, but I wish only decent, pious Christians. Frivolous infidels, free thinkers, disturbers of the peace of the type of the 48-ers and incorrigible drunkards are to remain away." In a letter to a Church who supported him financially in Ludwig—Missionsverein, he states confidently, "this territory soon will be a flourishing state peopled with devout Germans, over which the heavenly rays of grace and blessings from Christ will be poured forth abundantly."[7] Apparently this effort paid off because over fifty German families settled that summer and another hundred the following year.[8] This specificity of the type of Germans he brought seems odd. While Pierz was a progressive for his time in his views of the Native Americans, he was clearly not a progressive in terms of his own countrymen and their political and religious beliefs. The very fact that he viewed the democratic attempts of the Germans of the 1848 revolution with disdain, likening them to "drunkards" and "infidels" shows lack of insight. However, Father Pierz was depending on money from religious orders in Germany to support his mission work. Since he was being supported by the edicts of the church-run nation, it would be in his disinterest to have them overrun,

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[7] Franz X. Pierz, letter to Ludwig-Missionsverein, 7 Sept. 1855, <u>Scriptoriur</u>, 1952. 2.
[8] McDonald 3.

even if it meant the liberty of the citizens.

In summary for the initial settlers of the city, the geographical separation into three areas is appropriate considering their differing social, political and ethnic backgrounds. In a matter of a decade, however, the three cities folded into one, as the city's make-up became increasingly German-Catholic during The Civil War era. With the outbreak of the war many of the Southerners, rallied by Lowry, began to move back south, taking their slaves with them. After years of fights with abolitionists, finally in 1862 General Lowry himself moved back south to defend the confederates. The east-coast element of the city began to dissolve as well as more German Catholics came. "An 1861 report of a German-Catholic mission society pointed out that 'Whoever wants to own land can choose here after his liking, can claim or buy particularly from the Yankees, who all move away from the Catholic environment.'"[9] The native-ist sentiment, which was fairly rampant at this time no doubt contributed to this. Many third and fourth generation Americans disliked the German customs, language and Catholicism. There were many of these people, like Swisshelm, who had moved to St. Cloud from the East Coast, were used to a very Anglican society, and moved back to that. This created an environment that became increasingly more German and Catholic.

The Germans of St. Cloud and Minnesota

St. Cloud in particular and the state of Minnesota in general attracted Germans from all over Germany, and these Germans brought with them a whole new viewpoin*t*,

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[9] June Drenning Holmquist, ed., <u>They Chose Minnesota</u>, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981. 168.

that spouted from the political and social ferment within Germany. Because the city became increasingly German and Catholic it is important to look at the reasons these immigrants came to the U.S., who they were in their old country and what they added to the culture and politics of their adopted land. Many of these settlers came to Minnesota to find a certain kind of environment and, like a lot of immigrants, were attracted to others who shared their heritage. So while the early city of St. Cloud was more diverse, it became increasingly German. There was evidence of this even through the 1900s. "The area's attraction for German immigrants persisted in the 20th century; in 1940 they comprised 52.3% of the foreign born, and as recently as 1970 persons of German stock constituted over 50% of Stearns County's population. In that year 13% of St. Cloud residents claimed German as a mother tongue."[10] However the majority of immigrants from Germany arrived between the years of 1855 and 1870.

They came to the U.S. for a number of reasons.   There were economic factors: the Industrial Revolution, the change in farming which increased the number of landless workers, the search for higher wages. Additional factors included the Bavarian inheritance customs with property was leaving the rest of the family without homes or land to farm.   There was also a growth in population. These factors changed the standard of living. In addition to these reasons the search for social equality and freedom from state-church domination were also important factors.

Part of the search for social equality that drove the Germans to America was the result of the revolution of 1848 in Germany. This movement was an effort of well-educated German intellectuals to unify Germany and to create a democratic state. While

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[10] June Drenning Holmquist, ed., They Chose Minnesota, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981. 167.

they drew up constitutions in a number of areas, it was difficult to create enough momentum behind the movement. They were not able to get the military backing needed for a coup so the government refused to recognize the revolution. "But what infinitely complicated the German revolutionary movement, gave it its peculiar color, and brought about its tragic culmination, was that in Germany the problem of establishing a constitutional and popular government […] was linked to the problem of uniting the German people in a genuine organized community.[11]" They were attempting to bring about social equality and an end to the oppressive class system in the country, but they lacked the collective power needed for the change.

There were many ideas about social equality and revolution that came out of this movement that have had a lasting impact within Germany at the time and throughout the world. "The so-called March Revolutions in Baden, Berlin, and Vienna, all carried the proletariat to the barricades, thus anticipating a revolution which did not come to fruition until seventy years later in Russia."[12] In Germany, these marches, drowned in blood, were forced to surrender to reactionary elements. However, the movement also brought about a number of important literary and philosophical works including the *Communist Manifesto*.

Three ideas that dominated the scene of the 1848 revolution were liberty, democracy, and national unity, and many of the leaders of this movement fled to the U.S. with those on their minds. "The struggles in the unification process of the German states brought to America not only the immigrant with a desire for a better life in a new

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[11] Adolf E. Zucker, The Forty-Eighters; Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848, New York: Columbia UP, 1950.
[12] Zucker 9.

country, but also the political exile, who, unable to further a cause in Germany, set about

to create a political reconstruction of Germany from the safety of America."[13].

  The revolution was focused in three areas: Austria, Prussia, and Baden and the

Southwest. Hundreds of thousands of people from these areas immigrated to the U.S

after the attempted revolution, through the 1870's. While the leaders of the 1848

revolution, who came to the U.S. as political refugees, were a very small percentage of

total immigration from Germany at the time, what they lacked in size they made up in

education and ability to lead, making their social impact on the their ethnic group

striking. They were "well educated and articulate, the Forty-Eighters who arrived in the

early 1850s provided an important stimulus to immigrant cultural life and political

participation." [14]   Many of the 48ers left Germany and became the editors of journals and

leading critics of political issues. "They had a significance far greater than their numbers,

leavening the whole loaf, as it were, with their democratic and egalitarian ideals."[15]

  This is demonstrated in their leadership throughout the country and the state of

Minnesota. These "free-thinkers" and "red republicans" were known to have settled in

parts of Southern Minnesota, mainly the New Ulm area.   In April 1854 a group of

German students of English, led by Ferdinand Beinhorn in Chicago, founded a society to

encourage progressive Germans to settle in the Midwest. Membership grew to 800

people and dues were collected for the purchase of land. This group sent out scouts

across the Midwest who finally purchased land in southern Minnesota.   They then

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[13] R. Klietsch, and W. Nelson, The Ethnic Newspaper: A Study of the Stages of Development of a Foreign-Language Newspaper and the Process of Assimilation, 1963. 5
[14] Wolfgang Helbich, ed., Germans in the Civil War : The Letters They Wrote Home, trans. Susan C. Vogel, New York: University of North Carolina P, 2006. 2.
[15] Wolfgang 2.

moved there the following year, and divided up land with a large portion decidedly for public commons.

This group was later joined by 1,300 Turnverein members, which arrived in St. Paul from Cincinnati. The Turner movement, founded in 1817, Germany, combined gymnastics, nationalism, anticlericalism, political liberalism and socialism. It became popular in German American communities across the country with the arrival of the 1848 refugees.   This group was looking for "a German settlement [and with] educational opportunities for the children of liberals and freethinkers."[16] In 1856 the two groups formed the "German Land Association of Minnesota." However, financial issues made this cooperative socialist settlement fail and the association dissolved by 1859.   This did not stifle the success of individuals of the colony and it made this colony named New Ulm a distinct, extremely German town. In 1860 in New Ulm out of 635 settlers, 633 were born in Germany.

While the majority of immigrants to the U.S. from Germany were not directly involved in the revolutionary effort, they carried its ideas with them and it was in their interest. "The economic burdens of the German lower classes were related to their political impotence and their lack of a voice in village self-administration."[17] These immigrants came to the U.S. and were astounded by the variance of social order in the U.S. Many wrote letters ecstatic about the potential for social mobility.

While there were settlements of "free-thinkers" in Minnesota and across the U.S. a question critical to this study is whether they were in Central Minnesota. Although the St. Cloud area was not known to have been settled by a movement of progressives, it is

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[16] Kathleen N. Conzen, Germans in Minnesota, Chicago: Borealis Book, 2003. 2.
[17] Wolfgang 2.

still likely they were familiar with the movement. However, Father Pierz, who is accredited with bringing Germans to St. Cloud, was very particular about who came and when he wrote letters to newspapers all over the country, he was asking for a certain type of German.

The fact that the priest specifically asked the "free-thinkers" and the "48-ers" to stay away is indicative of where he stood in the conflict. As a leader of the German-Catholics of the area it is interesting whether or not the community's Germans were a reflection of his desire. The majority of German immigrants that came to St. Cloud before the Civil War were from the part of Germany that is now Western-Germany, what was then Reinish-Prussia.[18] There were also many from Baden and Bavaria, numbering in the thousands.[19] These were the same areas where the revolutionaries of 1848 were most active. Also when Pierz wrote in his letter to Cincinnati that he specifically didn't want the "48ers" as he might have known that there were many 48ers that had settled in that city. The first Germans were those who had resettled from Ohio and other big cities. So while Pierz wanted only "thrifty" and "good" Catholics, there were people in St. Cloud who had been exposed to the ideas of the German revolution, if not in Germany then in the Eastern cities of the U.S. in which they first settled.

Another question is what type of role the religion of the settlers of St. Cloud had on the culture of its citizens. While early German settlers in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Southern Minnesota primarily founded Lutheran churches the Germans of St. Cloud were

[18] History and Influence of German Culture on St. Cloud and Surrounding Area From 1850-1984, Rep.no. Paper found at Stearns County Historical Society, no author or publisher given.1.
[19] Donna Solberg, Special Education Cultural Project, Rep.no., Special Education. 237.

very Catholic. The German Catholic settlers of the mid-19th century have been and remain a majority in St. Cloud and Central Minnesota. According to an article in the *Stearns-Morrison Enterprise* "A survey of the county in the early 1920s claimed a population of 92 percent German and 95 percent Catholic which made it the most German-Catholic county in the nation."[20]

So while Southern Minnesota was more Lutheran and Central Minnesota was more Catholic, there were also other differences. While the Germans of Minnesota were mainly Republicans throughout the 1850's and Civil War area, the Germans of St. Cloud were almost strictly Democrat, and the reason for this is questionable. There was also much more widespread use of the German language in Central Minnesota.

While the fact that the "free-thinking" New Ulm area was significantly Protestant and Central Minnesota was mainly "good Catholics" might be indicative of political divides based on religion, a study of letters written by Germans in the Civil War would suggest otherwise. "One strong piece of evidence against religious determinism is the fact that Germans of the same local origins and religious affiliation ended up supporting different political parties depending on where they happened to settle."[21] Also while originally settled by the Protestants, New Ulm too slowly became Catholic. " Thanks to the nature of its immigration, the church more than the union hall remained at the center of Minnesota's German community life. Even free-thinking New Ulm became by the end of the 19th century a Catholic stronghold overlooked by a Lutheran college on its bluffs."

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[20] Schurke 1
[21] Wolfgang 5.

Another difference was the language. While many German-Americans became integrated into American society, this was not true of those in Central Minnesota as demonstrated by German language use. "In eastern and central Stearns County outside of St. Cloud, many Germans had little opportunity to use English for miles around; such a real coherence distinguished them from the Germans in southeastern Minnesota."[22] This was probably due to the fact that the founders of the New Ulm colony originally met in a course to study English. However the common use of German is a key factor in how Central Minnesota wound up so isolated.

St. Cloud during the Civil War

Many immigrants in the Minnesota continued to settle in the area during the Civil War, which was obviously a critical time for social justice in the U.S. Due to their strength in numbers, the presence of the newly arriving immigrants as well as their vote had the potential for great impact in the conflict. Newly arriving immigrants found it difficult to pick political parties and affiliations because the politics of the civil war were very complex.

Germans were, as a rule, anti-slavery. This was no doubt due the social culture they brought with them from Germany and due to the work of the 48ers.

> "With the coming of the Red '48ers, however, veterans from another revolution
> who were committed to the overthrow of feudal-like institutions such as slavery
> and actively supported the extension of the democratic revolution, German
> Americans and, especially workers, came under the influence of a group of

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[22] June Drenning Holmquist, ed., <u>They Chose Minnesota</u>, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981. 169.

fighters whose vanguard role in that community was out of proportion to their numbers."[23]

These 48ers, who were influential, especially with the pen, helped remind German Americans where they needed to stand on the issue of slavery.

Yet while many Germans were anti-slavery they were deterred from the movement in the U.S. by the religious "fanaticism" of their Anglo American, anti-slavery counterparts and resented that abolition came as a package that included temperance movement and its prohibitions on alcohol.[24]   There were many who also strayed away from the Republican Party, which became the party for those who were anti-slavery, due to the anti-immigrant sentiment of the time. Many of those involved in the "Know-Nothing" movement had drifted into the Republic Party after that movement failed, which brought a lot of anti-immigration policies to the Republican platform.

Both the Democrats and the Republicans of the time were eager to get Germans in Minnesota. Thousands of new voters could easily swing state elections. This was especially so in Minnesota. "Minnesota […] had the most liberal laws of any state in the Union for the enfranchisement of immigrants: the newcomers could vote within four months after applying for citizenship."[25]   So the Democrats at the time were known to lobby Germans, upon arrival in the U.S., about the Democrats' immigration-friendly platform.

St. Cloud was being settled at this time of rising nativist or anti-immigrant sentiments. According to an article from the *Stearns-Morrison Enterprise* this had an

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[23] Nimtz 126.
[24] Wolfgang 2.
[25] 140.

isolating impact on the citizens of Central Minnesota. "At the time when Stearns County was being settled by Catholic immigrants from Germany, there was much antipathy against any persons who were not white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, or WASP. Non-WASPs were derided for their odd language and odd customs."[26] Regardless of their political party, this did not change how German immigrants felt about the issue of slavery. "Of all white workers, German Americans were the ones most likely to have been opponents of the slaveocracy on the eve of the war."[27]

So St. Cloud was by no means stranger to these political complexities. "Many in St. Cloud were like early settler Joseph Edelbrock, who was identified by Mrs. Swisshelm as a 'whole-hearted, slavery-hating, German Democrat.' But there were other Democrats, like attorney Christopher C. Andrews, who believed that the North was bound to uphold the terms of the Missouri Compromise for the sake of the Union and peace."[28] There was the pro-slavery southern element of the city; however, this was not the general feeling. The city stayed Democrat due to the politics of the German immigrants who were anti-slavery as a rule. So while Minnesota went Republican, St. Cloud stayed Democrat.[29]

Even those who were Republican were not necessarily pro-Lincoln. Jane Grey Swisshelm, who was considered by many the mother of Minnesota's Republican Party, was not favorably inclined toward President Lincoln. She had wanted the nomination to go to William H. Seward and was disappointed when Lincoln received it. Her newspaper,

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[26] Jeanette B. Clancy, "Deutschstunde: Nativism's Effect on Stearns County," Stearns Morrison Enterprise 9 Dec. 1980. 1.

[27] August H. Nimtz, Marx Tocqueville and Race in America, New York: Lexington Books, 2003. 126.

[28] Dominik 30.

[29] Gove 28.

the *Visitor*, did not rally around Lincoln until the last week before the election. "She had wanted a strong abolitionist, and Lincoln's patient attitude looked like weakness to her."[30] This sentiment may also have been echoed by the strong anti-slavery Germans.

While there were mixed feelings in parts of the state for the justification of the Civil War, and lack-luster support for Lincoln, when the war broke out, Minnesota was the first to send troops to the Civil War. At the time Lincoln called for the first troops, the governor of Minnesota was one of the first to hear and immediately demanded troops to be gathered in his state. St. Cloud was very slow to heed the call. However, the war was declared in the name of the succession from the South, not for the abolishment of slavery. This deterred the St. Cloud area, everyone from Swisshelm to the German Democrats. It is not surprising that citizens of St. Cloud were reluctant to participate.

However, midway through 1861, volunteerism increased. By 1862, the Southern element of St. Cloud had abandoned the city, and "The St. Cloud Guards, a German company under Captain Lueg, left for Fort Abercrombie."[31] The direction of the war also changed from being a cause about uniting the country to a matter of abolition. It was around this same time that enthusiasm for the effort picked up in Central Minnesota. "In August 1862 the President issued a call for another 300,000 men, the second such request. Another company, the Annihilators, was formed in St. Cloud. At one meeting, after speeches had been made and the St. Cloud Brass Band had played stirring marches, 21 persons, mostly Germans, signed on the enlistment roll."[32] That might seem like a

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[30] Dominik 31.
[31] Dominik 32.
[32] Dominik 34.

small amount of soldiers, however it was significant in terms of the size of the city and considering these were volunteers.

By the end of the war, the area stood out in the state for participation. "Despite the early reluctance to march off to war 647 Stearns County men (from an 1860 population of 4,505) eventually enlisted in the Union Army."[33] This gave Central Minnesota a rate of over 14% in the army, compared to the state-wide participation of 13%. "Many Germans, to be sure, were as eager to enlist in the Union army as any of their neighbors."[34] While Germans represented about 14.7% of the State's population their representation in the civil war was 17% of union soldiers for Minnesota.[35] Because those in charge of quotas for military recruits were conscious to make the distribution of soldiers fair, even across ethnic groups, these numbers show that there must have been significantly more volunteerism within the German community. Also the majority of the German enlistments came after the first year of the civil war, which was when the war became less about making the country one and more about overthrowing the laws of slavery.

This also meant the German community felt the costs of the war at a slightly higher rate. Casualties during the Civil War were great, and soldiers from Minnesota died disproportionately to any other state, especially in big battles such as The Battle of Gettysburg.

Post Civil War St. Cloud

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[33] Dominik 35.
[34] Conzen 63.
[35] Conzen 63.

While St. Cloud Germans showed a willingness to support the Civil War effort, backed with the principles of social equality, this enlightenment failed to develop in St. Cloud, New Ulm or throughout the state of Minnesota into any further social movement. Shouldn't the 48ers and those other German immigrants who were against slavery and for liberty and democracy have continued the fight in the following years? The movement was stifled by a number of causes. One of these is the easy access to land during this era.

While there was great potential for a labor movement, due to the momentum of the Civil War, access to land stopped this. Fredrich Engels said, "In the densely populated states [of the United States] the labor movement was organized but the extent of unoccupied land prevented [it from] getting stronger than it was."[36] This is because of what it means to be the proprietor of land. Now as it was then, to have land is a chance to have a means of subsistence, to build wealth, and to be the one in control. In Germany those who had land were rich and powerful. The vast majority of immigrants that came from that country, and a lot of Europe, were people who were brought down by their inability to be owners in that system. For immigrants to have been able to be purchase land was moving up within society. This may have been the first time many had the chance to do more than labor. So while the search for social equality was first on their minds when they left their homes, its prominence may have faded when they arrived in a land that gave them so much potential for wealth and control of their lives.

This access to land took place especially in Minnesota and St. Cloud. Many of those who had been living in crowded eastern cities, where they would have been employed in industrial labor work, migrated to the Midwest and found cheap land in

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[36] Nimtz 147.

places like St. Cloud.   "Land was very cheap at the time. A farm could be purchased from the government at a dollar and a quarter an acre."[37] At the end of the war, this land was snatched up very quickly. "The United States Land Office was doing a rushing business with these newcomers to Minnesota. Between April 1 and June 30, 1865 105,286 acres were sold and 96,296 acres taken as homesteads."[38]

As stated before, another important driving factor for immigration besides an oppressive social economic system was political impotence. In Minnesota, immigrants were able to have access to land property, which provided social mobility and an increasing chance for economic stability. Yet an important addition to this was that the liberal voting laws of Minnesota created the potential for political representation.   When the immigrants were coming from communities that had been dictated by rich landowners or royalty, to be able to have a voice in government through voting was a drastic change. So while the revolutionary element of the German immigrants, the 48ers, were fighting for liberty and democracy they found access to these in the Midwest. So while the voting offered access to political power and social mobility, it may have taken the steam out of their political fight, and perhaps made them more concerned about maintaining their status quo.

An important aspect of any social movement is getting people behind the cause. With the Germans in the 19th century ethnic prejudice as well as religion prevented this. "Disunity within the group combined with the Yankee-Scandinavian alliance within the dominant Republican Party to sideline Germans politically and culturally in the 19th

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[37]Sister leone Treacy, "The Industrial Activities of the Foreign Born in St. Cloud in 1860," Acta et Dicta 7 (1935): 212.
[38] Gove 54.

century and to keep them divided in the 20th" [39] Without being able to breach divides

with other ethnic groups, a cohesive movement was not possible. This problem was

further exacerbated by the religious divides between Catholic and Protestant Germans.

For example, "Catholics remained prominently outside the Minnesota branch of the

German-American Alliance […] boycotting its 1909 German Day celebration in St. Paul

and founding their own Catholic City Federation instead. Effective unity came only after

1914, when the Alliance led other Minnesota German organizations and the state's

German-language press in crusading for American neutrality in Europe's war and raising

money for the German and Austro-Hungarian Red Cross."[40]

This was worsened due to the way settlements became increasingly dominated by

one religion and often one ethnic group. The land claimed in Minnesota and Central

Minnesota slowly became more ethno-centric. "The randomness of the initial land claim

process meant that farming settlements were often shared at first by persons of varying

ethnicities and faiths. But as more Germans arrived in an area, outsiders were often

willing to sell out and move on, leaving community institutions and culture in German

control."[41]   Central Minnesota slowly became less diverse. This made the region

continually more Catholic and German.

> "The role played by the Catholic Church in attracting German immigrants to
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> Stearns County was a large one, but in 1870 there were also small numbers of
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> Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and
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> Presbyterians. By 1906, when only 47.6% of the state's population claimed

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[39] Conzen 81.
[40] Conzen 66.
[41] Conzen 25.

religious affiliation, 73.8% of those in Stearns County did so—and of that number

85.9% were Catholic. These figures remained stable. Twenty years later 81.9% of

the county's church members were Catholic, and the figure returned 10 years later

to 83.5%. As late as a 1957, a survey of church membership revealed that, while

38.4% of the state was Catholic, in Stearns County Catholics comprised 68.5% of

the church-affiliated population." [42]

The dominance of one type of Christianity remained a factor in the area for well more

than a century.

The Catholic Church in the area also changed from the early days. With the

growth of the region the St. Cloud Catholic diocese was allowed to form its own entity

separate from the metro area of St. Paul. "They gained strength and autonomy from their

concentrated settlement patterns, particularly in the central part of the state, where the St.

Cloud diocese was set off from St. Paul in 1875 and committed to the care of a series of

German-speaking bishops […] the willingness of bishops to turn the care of sometimes

troublesome German parishes over to German religious orders encouraged a certain

cultural independence."[43] The new autonomy of the church in St. Cloud was a factor that

contributed to the isolation of the area.

The result of these various trends is evident in the lack of the development of

unionism in St. Cloud and Central Minnesota. So while at the end of the 19th century

there were groups of Germans organizing unions, this does not seem to be something

carried into the 20th century.   The author of the book *Germans in Minnesota*, stated that,

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[42] Holmquist 168.

[43] Conzen 42.

"Germans do not seem to have played so prominent a role in Minnesota union history as in many other parts of the nation, perhaps simply because they were less numerous within the working class than elsewhere or perhaps because the state attracted more than its share of rural conservatives and fewer of the radical industrial immigrants of the 1880s."[44] This can more effectively be attributed to a number of causes as previously stated. There were many divides within the group. These included anything from language differences to religious affiliation. With St. Cloud the Catholics became continually isolated from other Catholics and Germans in the state, as well as the obvious divides between them and other Christians.

Yet the establishment of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety also played a role in keeping the labor movement at bay. "Germans were the most obvious target though its Twin Cities business backers used the Commission primarily as a weapon against the rising agrarian and labor agitation of the Non-partisan League and the International Workers of the World."[45]

Another reason could have been due to the paternalism of German business owners in cities like St. Paul. Many German workers were well off enough and treated fairly by their employers not to have felt the need for unionization. This might have been the case because the German business owners had come out of a society that had mistreated laborers and so wanted to do better when they themselves became the proprietors.

There are many reasons that while St. Cloud Germans showed a willingness to support the Civil War effort, backed with the principles of social equality, this

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[44] Conzen 67.
[45] Conzen 67.

enlightenment failed to develop into any movement in St. Cloud after the war. Access to land brought social and economic change, the opportunity to vote assured political access, concentration of ethnic groups in the area with retention of German language and customs brought unity as well as isolation, which was further reinforced by ethnic and religious prejudice. Furthermore the development of a basically German-Catholic religious identity with its own diocese, German religious orders and bishops continued a trend toward a separate identity. The result of these factors was an evolution to conservative, isolationist group of residents instead of the diverse multi-ethnic population of the Civil War era.

The Newspaper and Germans

Yet another large factor in the political ineffectiveness of the Germans after the Civil War, at least in the St. Cloud area, can be found in the written leadership of the German newspaper. The newspaper had a huge impact in the development of the further isolation of the German Americans and especially the German Catholics of St. Cloud. This is true because of the traditions of ideals of the press that German immigrants brought with them from their homeland. The role the newspaper played in society was a unique characteristic of the heritage of the German-Americans of the second half of the 19th century.

There was a prominent culture of the press in Germany. "Journalism and the preservation of a singular literary tradition were in the forefront of the orientations which the Germans either provided or supplemented. The effects of the rise of a German national literary form, developed between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in

Romanticism and Realism, were transplanted to the American scene via the German press."[46] Due to this, the newspaper was an important part of new communities. At the peak of the foreign language newspapers in the U.S., the German-American papers constituted 80%.[47] German language newspapers were a popular tool for discussions of politics and literature, among other issues. The culture of readership was also different. While many Americans feel it is their job to criticize their newspapers, the Germans venerated them. "The case was different among the Germans, they looked up to respectable newspapers as a species of paternal guides and instructors."[48]

Because the newspaper was such an important part of the immigrant culture, it had a heavy impact on communities. A study of the ethnic newspaper has said that "whenever the ethnic population density in a given locale has been large enough to support a foreign-language press, the newspaper has been a means of preserving the cultural ties of the immigrant with the homeland."[49] For German immigrants in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, "the ethnic newspaper acted as a boundary-maintaining device which has kept the values, beliefs, sentiments, hopes, and ethos alive in the face of a larger system […] a primary force operating to counter-act the process of assimilation."[50] The German newspapers played an important role in the German-American culture. "The German press became, to a significant extent, the 'back-

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[46] R. Klietsch, and W. Nelson, <u>The Ethnic Newspaper: A Study of the Stages of Development of a Foreign-Language Newspaper and the Process of Assimilation</u>, 1963.1.
[47] Klietsch 2.
[48] Klietsch 4.
[49] Klietsch 2.
[50] Klietsch 2.

bone of German culture' in the United States."[51] This demonstrates the relevance of the

German newspaper in shaping as well as maintaining the identity of the German-

American ethnic groups. The German newspaper had a significant following in Central

Minnesota, in fact the most so of any publication in the region.

This meant that the agenda of the newspaper had a significant impact on its

readers. The German newspapers can be divided into different categories based on the

content. There were many political papers of which, for example, the 48ers became paper

editors. "Socialism and communism, both rife social philosophies of the nineteenth

century, were supported in variant forms by the German-American radical press. Thus,

the Milwaukee *Arbeiter*, the New Orleans *Der Communist*, and even a Minnesota paper,

the New Ulm *Pioneer*, were representatives of this type of publication."[52] While the

"free-thinkers" of New Ulm supported a socialist paper, the citizens of St. Cloud were the

patrons of a literary paper entitled *Der Nordstern*.

When *Der Nordstern* distributed its first issue in 1872, it was one of three

publications in Central Minnesota at the time. In addition to *Der Nordstern*, there was

also *The St. Cloud Daily Times*, and *The St. Cloud Journal*. However *Der Nordstern* had

the highest circulation of the other two, and the highest of any newspapers north of the St.

Paul[53]. It was not just another American newspaper written in German; it was more than a

source of news, but a hub of culture and discussion in the German community.   The very

fact that this area could support not only a German newspaper, but maintain the highest

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[51] Klietsch 3.
[52] Klietsch 5.
[53] "The Nordstern." St. Cloud Daily Times 15 Dec. 1892

readership of any paper north of the Twin Cities shows that there was a active population of Germans wanting to stay in touch with their roots.

While *Der Nordstern* was considered a literary paper, one that discussed and reviewed new German literature, in its beginning it was a source of great political banter. Editorials and letters to the editor contained ideas about many political philosophies, and did not take one particular party platform. However, in the fall of 1892 *Der Nordstern* was sold to a syndicate of Catholic priests.[54] They apparently changed its political stance at this time. According to an article in the competing paper of the time while they had once been considered a more liberal press, but under the new direction they were going to adopt the mainstream views of the *St. Cloud Daily Times*. "The new owners announce that the paper will be Democratic at all times and under all circumstances, and support all County, State and national nominees of the party." Further adding, "That is a good platform, the one upon which the *Times* stands, and we sincerely trust that both papers may henceforth be found standing side by side in political contests." [55] Whether or not the Catholic priests forced this doctrine, this shows a key instance in which the readers were limited to a more narrow perspective, and prevented from the discussion of other viewpoints.

This is significant because of the importance of the press within the German community and paternal influence the editors of newspapers had in shaping the views of their readership. The purchase of the press by a group of Catholic priests, and the alignment of the newspaper's official political stance with that of the other newspaper in the area further limited the amount of exposure citizens had to opposing viewpoints and

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[54] "Personal," St. Cloud Daily Times 22 Oct. 1892. 1.
[55] "The Nordstern." St. Cloud Daily Times 15 Dec. 1892.

outside information. Because the culture of the press was so prominent in the heritage of the German speakers, and because at this time few people received much information in rural areas due to the lack of mass communication, one can see how handicapped the population could be from the lack of diverse information from this newspaper and how it could add to both the ethnic solidarity of the group and the loyalty to the opinions of the church.   This no doubt further strengthened the leadership of the Catholic Church in the area, and could help explain why the population grew more Catholic by percentage at the turn of the 20th century.

The paper lasted into the early 1930s, which is a long time considering the anti-German language laws of WWI era. However, what was covered in the newspaper had changed over the years. A study of the content of *Der Nordstern* also showed that while originally the newspaper featured a majority of international and German news, slowly the amount of articles dedicated to those topics was exchanged for a higher frequency of articles about local matters. While studies of other ethnic newspapers indicate the drop-off of international news and news of the home country for news of the U.S., the St. Cloud paper is unique in its drastically high content of local news[56]. The international news and mother country news dropped off significantly and was only replaced by local information. This illustrates perfectly how the city withdrew into itself.   This was especially the case during the period of WWI.

The Impact of WWI

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[56] Klietsch 14.

Because Central Minnesota was so German, the outbreak of WWI had a huge impact on the U.S. With the entrance of the U.S. in WWI a number of things changed across the country. The impact on the German-American population was severe. There were many Americans in the WWI era who doubted the loyalty of ethnic German Americans. Nativist sentiment that had been building during the second half of the 19th century culminated in various strikes against German-speakers. This was manifested through the government in Minnesota, as well as several other states. "Ten days after American entry into the war, the legislature established the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety with the sweeping powers to enforce loyalty and aid the war effort."[57]

The Commission subjected Minnesotans to spies and denunciations as well as censorship of textbooks and the press. They were also given $1 million to promote the war effort, which included staging loyalty demonstrations around the state. One commission report said, "The test of loyalty in war times is whether a man is wholeheartedly for the war and subordinates everything else to its successful prosecution."[58] This was especially true for the German-Americans. "To insure the 'loyalty' of German-Americans during World War I, however, the fires under the pot were encouraged to burn a little hotter in St. Cloud and throughout Minnesota, sometimes in what today would be considered violation of civil rights."[59]

Very German areas such as St. Cloud and, in Southern Minnesota, cities like New Ulm, were frightened and angered by both the movement to war and the formation of the new commission. This was not an unfounded fear as there were people across the state

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[57] Conzen 67.

[58] Peters David, "German-Americans: 'Melting Pot' Process Fights Strains from Wars, Language," St. Cloud Times 1976. People Section, Bicentennial Issue. 1.

[59] Peters 1.

and country who were being convicted of "serious charges" for opposing the war. Two men in Minnesota were brought to court for voicing their dissent around the war issue.[60] Another man was reported for flying a German flag on his property and the treatment was severe. "They arrested him and took him to Washington where he was asked how much money he had when he came to this country and he replied that he had $15 which amount he was given and then put on a boat and sent to Germany."[61] These types of stories became regular news in German-American areas.

The commission was given the power to remove state and local officials from office if they thought they were disloyal to the cause. Even worse was the Commission's move to clear out overly German or "unpatriotic" forces in government. "New Ulm's city attorney, Albert Pfaender, son of the city founder, and its mayor, Lousi A. Fritsche, were removed from office for challenging the constitutionality of the draft, while Adolph Ackermann, president of Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, was forced to resign under pressure for the same reason."[62]

St. Cloud was saved from such an overhaul of their system due to the work of the bishop of St. Cloud. Because the St. Cloud Catholic Church had been separated from that of the St. Paul leadership it was allowed to stay very German, in a way that southern cities like New Ulm did not. There were many parishes in the area that celebrated only German mass. Just days after the declaration of war by Congress, Bishop Busch of St. Cloud called all the Catholics in St. Cloud together and gave an address. He first went through the politics of the war and justified the terms in which the President and entered

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[60] "Two Men Face Serious Charges." Withrop News 14 Nov. 1918.
[61] "Traitor Gets Just Dues." Winthrop News 9 May 1918.
[62] Conzen 68.

the war. Bishop Busch said, "If God did not so desire, Wilson would not be President. It is part of God's scheme. He could eliminate him if he wanted to."[63] He closed his speech with "Either get a new President or obey and trust the one you have at the present time!"[64] He also asked his patrons to show their material support by buying war bonds and volunteering to serve in the military. He authorized the singing of the national anthem in Sunday High Mass, and required that every church give at least one mass in English each week. He did so "partially to unite his ethnically fragmented diocese and partially to protect the church from an un-American label."[65] Then he sent a copy of his address to President Wilson, who responded with a personal letter thanking the city for assuring patriotism. In the end St. Cloud citizens raised $300,000 in liberty bonds, $50,000 above the city's goal. They also did not experience the scrutiny of local government by the state commission in the same way that New Ulm did.

The lasting impact of this commission and the anti-German sentiments of the country had several dimensions. While in many areas of the country the scrutiny of the German-American community had an Americanizing effect on the people, in St. Cloud it had the opposite effect. "It is evident even today that the effort to thoroughly assimilate with the American culture was not carried out in Stearns County. If people here could not be treated with respect and dignity by other Americans, they could turn to each other, to their own kind."[66]

The ban on German language in school also crippled the community. While the Germans in the area, coming from a strong literary tradition one that had once supported

[63] Busch 14.
[64] Busch 15. ?????????
[65] Peters 1.
[66] Clancy 1.

a literary newspaper and had been advocates of the education system, the culture

changed. According to a sociologist at St. John's University, before 1920 those coming

from German-speaking homes learned excellent English and had enthusiasm for school.

However the group afterwards "was not so widely read nor did they appear to have the

type of interests that seemed to characterize those who had been educated earlier. The

broad range interest pattern seemed lacking."[67] People turned inward, and against

teachers who had to enforce the state's policy. "Teachers and schools were viewed as

meddling outsiders, usurping the authority of parents and community. Education was no

longer considered important."[68] In a short time the immigrants who had fostered a love

of books and an appreciation for intellectual thoughts seemed to have disappeared,

replaced by people who felt betrayed by the forces of government and the school system.

This distrust for government and for outside authority was further exasperated by

the prohibition of the 1920's. Drinking, especially beer had long been an important

tradition within the German community; the same was true for German-Americans in

Minnesota. There were dozens of breweries statewide, and several within Central

Minnesota. Beer gardens were a popular place for gathering, and a focal point of the

community.   Prohibition hit and those who loved this tradition felt a slap in the face.

These people felt the government was over-stepping its boundaries, so many Central-

Minnesotans rebelled. Brewing alcohol became a lucrative trade that appealed to many

farmers facing hard times in the 1920's[69]. One sympathetic monk from St. Johns, the

monastery near St. Cloud, apparently gave equipment and helped teach some farmers

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[67] Clancy 1.
[68] Clancy 1.
[69] Dominik 69.

how to distill liquor. Some of the liquor became so prominent that there was a drink named "Minnesota 14" that could be purchased as far as California at the time, made by the boot-legers of Stearns County. Most local police turned a blind eye, however the federal agents that came in were not so forgiving. Displaying another instance where Central Minnesotans found people they could depend on in the localities and the Catholic Church, but not from state and federal authorities.

By the time of the Great Depression St. Cloud considered itself very independent from the rest of the nation. While not as badly hit as many places in the country, hard times made the city rally together. One plan by the mayor called on all business to make sure they hired as many people as possible. There was then a city fundraiser to help local businesses pay for the program. They raised over $800,000 to provide jobs. "Mayor Murphy proudly stated that federal aid was not needed in St. Cloud: 'We can take care of ourselves.'" While cities all over the country were being revamped with federal dollars via grants from the "New Deal" era programs, St. Cloud actually turned money away. This almost forced independence shows the forced isolation and independence of the area.

By the time the U.S. was engaged in WWII, while anti-immigrant sentiment was obviously still rampant, there was no where near the same anti-German sentiment across the nation. However St. Cloud was still as much of a cohesive German unit as ever. While the citizens of German background were no longer considered un-American, they felt they were still on their own. This feeling of isolation becomes apparent in how they treated social movements and outsiders, especially as seen in one analysis of the St. Cloud area granite industry.

St. Cloud had a prominent granite industry for years, one that still operates today. Beginning in the late 1800s, St. Cloud joined hundreds of cities nation wide in quarrying granite. Because of the prevalence of the stone in the region, it became an important part of the Central Minnesota economy (St. Cloud is nicknamed "The Granite City"). However unlike the rest of the U.S., St. Cloud remained completely untouched by the international union movement that engulfed the rest of this industry. The Granite Cutters International Association began in 1820 and by 1877 was an affiliate of the AFL. At the end of the 19th century the industry was 95% organized. While some unions were stronger than others, St. Cloud was the only area where there were no unions at all. In 1922, while the entire country had been operating on a closed shop policy, called the "American Plan" the St. Cloud area and its 30 plus quarries and more than 1000 employees was still operating on an open shop policy.[70] This was the last area in country still doing so, thus constituting the least organized segment of the entire industry. As a result St. Cloud's granite workers had the lowest pay in the country[71]. They also had working conditions so bad that when the union finally did form in the early 1940s, and the workers sought a health insurance plan, two companies declined to insure them, stating workers in the factory were too unhealthy, citing especially lung issues due to granite dust.

Failure to organize in St. Cloud cannot be due to either paternal business owners or the lack of laborers, but is rather the result of isolation from the rest of the state, and largely, the nation. According to a study done on the union in the early 1940's, workers

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[70] Weidner, Majorie. The History of the Organization of Labor in the Granite Industry with Special Reference to the St. Cloud Area. 21 Jan. 1944. 9-11.
[71] Weidner 12.

created much opposition in the St. Cloud area due to lack of knowledge about the benefits

to be obtained from the union as well as "suspicions" that the union would make dues too

high. While these are classic complaints of workers about unions, it is strange that out of

the entire industry, St. Cloud quarry men would be the only ones to refuse unionization.

Post-World War II St. Cloud

The aspects of isolation and cultural independence have persisted, and the city has

suffered for it. By the 1950's the city had grown quite a bit, maintaining its place as one

of the three biggest metro areas in the state (after the Twin Cities and Duluth). However,

it was still operating as a pioneer town, with a mayor only working part-time and city

municipalities that had not been revamped since the turn of the 20th century. Yet this did

not stop the area from thriving, attracting new businesses and having considerable

population growth. "The suddenly rapid growth of the city was so pronounced that by

1970 the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area was classified as the fastest-growing area in the

five contiguous states."[72] And still the culture of the city did not change so dramatically.

While newcomers were attracted to the area due to its several universities, its

thriving manufacturing sector and strong community, evidence of cultural bigotry were

still obvious. There have been many instances in the period since the 1970's that smack

of ethno-centricity and are no doubt the result of the city's history of cultural

independence and group isolation. In the early 1970's St. Cloud, like many cities in

Minnesota and nationwide, opened its arms to Vietnamese and Laotian refugees and

immigrants. St. Cloud had the largest number of out-state Vietnamese immigrants, who

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[72] Dominik 104.

were hosted by many organizations in the area. However this did not bode well to some citizens. On the fourth of July in 1979, around fifty white youths in a St. Cloud park attacked five Vietnamese residents in a park. According to a police report, one of the victims was thrown into the river and was only semiconscious when pulled out by the police, while onlookers yelled racial epithets and obscenities.[73] Strangely enough the event was not reported on in the newspaper, but was stated in *They Chose Minnesota*, a book about immigrants in Minnesota.

Since the 1970s, an ordinance existed in the city records that banned any person of color or any immigrant from driving taxis. While many city officials have said that they had no idea this existed, it was used against Somali immigrants until 2003. While the city may not have continued enforcing the ordinance, the St. Cloud's Yellow Taxi Company certainly did. According to the owner of the company, he chose not to employ immigrants because they could not know the way around the city and acted too rudely. While this was blatant discrimination, the city officials did not pick up the case. Somalis claimed that in larger cities that are more difficult to navigate this same excuse was not used. According to the head of the Yellow Taxi Company in Minneapolis, 60 percent of his drivers are from African countries originally. Several Somali immigrants who originally drove taxi in Somalia moved from St. Cloud when they were refused employment by the company and are now driving in Chicago.[74]

While this type of treatment might be out of the ordinary, what has been cited in several reports, about St. Cloud State, is the pervasive existences of a "good-ole boy"

[73] Holmquist 585.
[74] Baxter, Annie. "News and Features." St. Cloud Somalis Turned Away from Taxi Driving Jobs. MPR. 7 June 2004. Minnesota Public Radio. 30 July 2008 <http://www.news.mpr.org>.

network in the city[75]. When the frequency of hate-based attacks increased at SCSU, state and federal groups came in to study the institution. Results from a report done by the EEOC stated that, "Witness testimony reveals the perception of an overriding "White male privilege" on campus. There is the perception that a "good ole boy" network still exists."[76] This same report also concluded that the affirmative action office was deemed completely ineffective. The Campus Climate Assessment report stated that people of color in all demographic groups experienced higher rates of harassment and discrimination. [77] The Nichols Report stated numerous issues with generally concerns of dissatisfaction including "attitudes of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and homophobia, taunting and/or harassment on and off campus" as just a few.

St. Cloud also has seen the same problems as it once did with unionization. Of course there are the problems typical of many unions where workers are apathetic towards, or suspicious of what the union is doing. However, according to Rob Jacobs, the leader of the employee union at the St. Cloud Correctional Facility, he is experiencing a new kind of racism since the War in Iraq. He said, "we have a Muslim man at work who is a good guy and wants to become involved in the union. We have many employees who have served in Iraq through their National Guard or Army Reserve and they treat this man very poorly."[78] Religious and ethnic divides are still prominent in keeping workers divided. This is no doubt worsened by the fact that for so many years St.

[75] Baily, Chester V. Investigation Report for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities St. Cloud State University. Rep.No. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Milwaukee: Milwaukee District Office, 2002.
[76] St. Cloud State University Cultural Audit: Final Report. Rep.No. NIchols and Associates, Inc. Washington, D.C.: Nichols, 2002.

[77] St. Cloud State University Campus Climate Assessment: Final Report. Rep.No. Rankin & Asociates. 2003.

[78] Jacobs.

Cloud has been ethnically and religiously isolated.

As the John Dominik, author of a history book on St. Cloud said, "In many ways St. Cloud is still a small pioneer town, caring first for its citizens and neighbors and their welfare, and only secondarily for its place in the harmony of cities and towns that comprise the state[79]" While this is no doubt true, and it is a city that is proud of itself and where it has come from, it should not follow that it is unwelcoming to newcomers, especially to the extent of clashes in recent years. Through this study we see 150 years of incidents that seems strangely familiar. There were the reoccurring waves of anti-immigration, and of accusations about disloyalty and tests of patriotism, especially centered in times war. There were also the religious leaders who bought out the press, limiting the citizen exposure to alternative viewpoints, and one who even claimed that the president must have God on his side. These parallels in recent history make a reassessment in our political and national culture, as well as of our media seem not only relevant, but also absolutely necessary to the furthering of our country and the welfare of its people. They also show the hurdles that must be overcome if there is ever to be a chance at the unity of the working class or any successful movements toward social equality.

Conclusion and the Lasting Impacts of the German-Americans

While Germans in Minnesota came from a strong background of social consciousness, the isolating effects of nativism and ethnic cohesion created a conservative culture. Although St. Cloud started with settlers from diverse backgrounds,

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[79] Dominik 112.

it became increasingly German-Catholic. The German-Americans in St. Cloud and

Central Minnesota were very enthusiastic about the Civil War and fighting for the end of

slavery. However, the access to social mobility, property, and cohesion of the community

with the strengthening of the church changed the community from the progressives that

fueled revolution in Germany to a group of people who resented outsiders and lashed out

at immigrants. While the Germans that came to the area were initially very interested in

literary culture and the world beyond their community, they slowly withdrew into

themselves. This was no doubt exasperated by the anti-German politics of WWI and the

strong dissent against prohibition in the 1920s, which deprived them of an important

community place. By the Depression era St. Cloud was its own entity. The city was

independent from federal aid, but also stood independent of national movements such as

unionism, which were taking place in industries important to Central Minnesota such as

the granite industry. The city shows lasting signs of its religious and ethnic isolation, in

its treatment towards others of different ethnicities, which has penetrated the local

government and education system. These problems must be addressed first in the media

and local bureaucracy if social equality or justice is ever to exist.

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